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ABSTRACT

Research into the needs of small school administrators and effective ways to help meet those needs through inservice education projects was conducted over a period of two years by means of a needs assessment and two small-scale workshops. The purpose of the workshops was to try out a basic format and some techniques perceived to be potentially more beneficial to the participants than the typical convention or meeting. A basic position taken in developing the format and materials for the workshops was that efforts to change educational practices, either in larger or smaller schools, have tended in the past to emphasize what should be changed, rather than how change might best occur. A review of literature revealed that recent experience in bringing about change in organizations has tended to indicate that the process, or change strategy, is more important than the identification of product or change desired. The format for the inservice workshops was designed to provide simulated experience in a change process that could be used with teachers and other school personnel. (Author)

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BETTER INSERVICE EDUCATION FOR PRINCIPALS OF SMALLER SCHOOLS

by

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BETTER INSERVICE EDUCATION FOR PRINCIPALS OF SMALLER SCHOOLS--RESULTS OF A PILOT STUDY

This project is the result of some investigation and preliminary efforts over a period of two years. A research grant from the State of Texas funded a needs assessment of small school administrators in West Texas in 1977. This culminated in a list of perceived needs for inservice education, including the severity of the needs. The report of that research was presented at the 1978 NASSP Convention and placed in the ERIC System (ED 150751).

The next step in our effort to provide better inservice education for small school principals was taken with the support of a Texas Tech Graduate Student Summer Research Fellowship during the summer of 1978. With this support, we were able to conduct a pilot workshop for small school principals on the Texas Tech campus in August, 1978. The purpose of this workshop was to try out a basic format and some techniques which we believed would be more beneficial to the participants than the typical convention or meeting. Actually, there are few, if any, meetings or workshops devoted primarily to the needs of small school principals, so we were attempting to develop some ideas about what one should be like.

WORKSHOP I (August 1978)

At the beginning of the August workshop we first reviewed the findings of the 1977 small schools principals' needs assessment. Dividing the participants into small groups, we next asked each group to identify some of the specific needs they felt were most important to them relative

to the topics of student discipline and curriculum development (two of the most often mentioned needs in the 1977 assessment). Each member of a small group was then asked to develop a plan of action for the remainder of the school year designed to meet the most important perceived need in the area of either student discipline or curriculum development. Members of the small groups helped each other with the development of these plans. The participants were asked to make these plans as specific as possible, including objectives, time-lines for completion of the steps in the plan, and procedures to evaluate the results of the effort.

At the conclusion of the time for work within the small groups, the total group reconvened to share the plans that had been made for action during the rest of the school year by individual principals. The remaining time available was used to react to these plans, make suggestions, and discuss alternative plans. One of the strongest concerns which came out during this discussion was that of motivating teachers to take an active and enthusiastic part in the efforts to improve their school's program and activities. Tentative plans were made for the group to meet again in the fall of 1978 to share progress reports of their efforts to carry out the individual plans of action which were developed during the workshop.

WORKSHOP II (November 2, 1978)

The purpose of this workshop was to follow up on the one conducted in August and help the principals develop further plans to move into the school year and improve their schools. Earlier tentative plans to share progress reports on the plans which were made in August by each principal were revised because several different principals participated

and because of the strongly expressed concern in August relative to the motivation of teachers to improve their instruction and the school program.

This workshop concentrated on helping the participants update their knowledge and competence relative to change processes in organizations, particularly small schools. Following a brief review of the current literature on successful change processes, the remainder of the workshop was basically devoted to simulating recommended change processes for a typical small school.

Literature Review of Promising Practices

Most efforts to change educational practices, either in larger or smaller schools have tended in the past to emphasize what should be changed, rather than how change might best occur. Recent experience in bringing about change in organizations, be they educational or others, has tended to indicate that the process, or change strategy, is more important than the identification of product, or change desired. Both have their place in planning for change, and we will give attention to them.

An exhaustive review of the literature on the process of educational change was conducted by Michael Fullan in 1972. His conclusions about recent educational change efforts were summarized by Stutz (1974) into twelve characteristics of the "Model Innovative Process." The emphasis of this model is on externally developed programs being transplanted into schools through administrative pressure, with little input from local teachers, parents, or students. Most of the educational change efforts of the 1960's generally

followed this model, and it was finally recognized that those efforts were largely fruitless. At best, adoption of the innovation became an end in itself, and little attention was given to whether the innovation actually improved teaching and learning.

Educational leaders recognized the need for a new strategy for educational change. The following assumptions were generally accepted as basic to such a strategy:

1. School improvements are longer lasting and more effective if those affected take part in the decision making process;
2. a comprehensive plan produces enduring improvements;
3. improvement of community communication, problem solving, and decision making skills increased the likelihood of positive action, local leadership, and group motivation;
4. a "process" person (outside consultant) facilitates group work and enhances the potential for reaching goals;
5. group projection of a desirable future is a better first step than identification of problems and concerns; and
6. consultative assistance is more positive when it builds independence, rather than dependence (Jongeward, 1975).

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory took these kinds of assumptions and developed the Rural Futures Development Process, as a part of the Rural Education Program (REP), for use in promoting change in rural schools. Stutz (1974) developed a chart contrasting the characteristics of the Model Innovative Process and those of the Rural Futures Development Process. As shown in the following chart, the differences are dramatic and far-reaching.

NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY
RURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
ROWAN C. STUTZ, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODEL INNOVATIVE PROCESS: (as identified by Michael Fullan, 1972 and reported by Statz (1974))	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RURAL FUTURES DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:
1. Innovations are developed externally and transmitted to schools on a relatively universal basis.	1. Learners, parents, and teachers have enough understanding of curriculum design, organizational development and instructional methods that they can make wise choices regarding the creative development of new programs, utilizing components of wide variety of alternatives.
2. Users of innovations (parents, teachers, students) have had limited roles in the educational change process, and generally are seen as passive adopters of the best of recent innovations.	2. Users (citizens, educators, students) are in control of the innovative process in their own schools and participate in selecting and/or creating the innovations to be used in working out the implementation problems.
3. Primacy is given to innovations which often become the ends of the change process rather than the means for achieving desired outcomes.	3. Primacy is given to outcomes and user capacities to innovate. Innovations are viewed as means to accomplishing desired outcomes.
4. Change is initiated from the outside and schools are viewed as a part of the universe of adopters.	4. Schools and their communities are viewed as initiators of change and as selective, creative, deliberative users of the products of research and development.
5. Educational reforms are often individualistic as a result of permissive process.	5. Educational reforms are pervasive--a result of participative process.
6. Values and goals as articulated by the users have no direct influence in the process.	6. Users' values and goals provide much of the input to the process and directly influence decisions made about innovating.

7. Diversity of innovations is not allowed.	7. RFD assumes wide diversity in goals and legitimizes diversity of alternatives. It recognizes that different communities and schools may have different objectives and priorities at any given point in time.
8. The force of the innovative process is from the top down.	8. The force of the innovative process is from the bottom up. The role of of the top-down relationship is to facilitate the bottom-up innovative process.
9. Role changes in user systems, which are theoretically part and parcel of intended consequences of most educational innovations, are not recognized and planned for.	9. Changes in roles and role relationships are part and parcel of the implementation process.
10. Little awareness exists that innovations require unlearning and relearning, and create uncertainty and a concern about competencies to perform new roles.	10. RFD recognizes that virtually every significant change has implications for changes in roles and role relationships. These changes, and the opportunity resources and atmosphere for acquiring needed new competencies, are integral components of the implementation process.
11. New educational ideas and organizational changes often, through lack of user involvement, become empty alternatives because they create unrealistic conditions and expectations for teacher, administrator, parent and/or student performance.	11. Users participate in deciding what changes are to be made and in deciding what is needed to successfully implement them. Thus, new performance expectations are more likely to be realistic and planned changes are more likely to occur.
12. Those affected by the change are dependent upon the process.	12. Use of the process is dependent upon those affected by the changes.

Some additional suggestions are made by Jongward (1975) on specific things to keep in mind when implementing a program such as the Rural Futures Development Process. They include the following:

1. Help members of your school-community begin to consider what they would view as a "desirable future."

   If possible, find a third party outside the community who is qualified to help you do this.

2. Try to involve the entire community--students (especially from junior high and senior high) and staff, custodians, secretaries, bus drivers, aides, community people--so that all voices can be heard.

3. Organize a broadly representative "mix" of these people to form a School-Community Group.

   This group must be sponsored by the school board but should act as an independent body (a third party problems solving group) that makes carefully prepared recommendations to the Board. Encourage and support this group.

4. When the group is established, ask them to examine the goals of their "desirable future" and determine which have priority.

   Then, ask them to list the barriers that prevent your school-community from reaching the goals they've listed as priorities.

5. Next, the group must examine available alternatives that can help them remove these barriers.

   Get them to identify what things are most important. Involve the whole community if possible. Responsive agencies are most helpful at this point of the search.

6. When one or more alternatives have been selected, the group should make a written recommendation to the board explaining their thinking and their conclusions up to this point.

7. Members of the board/administration study the report, accept or modify it as needed, and ask the group to develop final plans for initiating the recommendation.

   Involving the community group in implementation of the plan maintains their identification with and support of it. As school board members, share with them the responsibility for making it work!

8. In compliance with the board request, the group should develop a plan for implementing the recommendation, and bring it back to the board for final approval.

   It is especially helpful if the group includes in their plan indicators (criteria) that can be used to assess the relative success of the newly installed program/ project.

9. The School-Community Group helps install the new program, monitors it, and, after a few months, assesses the progress it has made.

   It is tempting at this point to let the professionals take over. Keeping the community group participating, however, builds confidence and support.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory has developed materials for the Rural Education Program under a comprehensive plan called School Community Process--formerly the Rural Futures Development Strategy (RFD).

The RFD products include (Jongeward, 1975):

1. A Notebook for School-Community groups
2. A Guide for School Board Development
3. A Guide for Schools
4. Strategy Descriptions
5. Process Facilitator Manual;
6. A Guide for Training Process Facilitators
7. Support Agency Materials

In 1975, the Lab reported that these products were undergoing exploratory testing in Utah. Further dissemination of the materials was expected.

Another promising project is the federally funded Experimental Schools Project in Small Schools. This project was initiated in 1972 when the United States Office of Education extended to small, rural districts its Experimental School Program to test the validity of lasting improvements

through internal comprehensive change rather than piecemeal innovative elements. Three hundred and twenty school districts applied for funding, with ten districts being selected for participation. Abt Associates was chosen as the independent research organization to document and evaluate the project (Abt Ass., 1975). The Experimental Schools Project was developed to place an emphasis on involvement of the total school system, and each district was asked to develop a proposal that included three major sections:

1. What did they want for their students, their schools, and their communities?
2. What plans did they have for achieving these goals? (to include curriculum; teacher training; parents and citizen participation; use of time, space, and facilities; and organization, administrative, and governance adjustments)
3. What plans did they have for self-evaluation during the life of the project? (Abt Associates, 1975).

In assessing the ten districts' proposals several factors are noteworthy. All ten districts wanted their students to be better prepared for life--in the hometown or elsewhere. Some of the specific practices directed at achieving this included:

a. Early educational programs to foster self-confidence.
b. Individualized curriculum to fit specific studies to individual goals.
c. Basic skills to prepare students for all opportunities.
d. Cultural enrichment programs to broaden students' scope and perception of life.
e. New programs to help students not experiencing educational success.

A second recurring theme was expansion of the learning process. This

meant a variety of things, including opening walls, exposing students to a larger environment, and utilizing the natural environment. A desire for change in eight broad areas was evident:

a. Outdoor education
b. Cultural enrichment programs
c. Basic skills
d. Counseling programs
e. Health and physical fitness
f. Early childhood and adult education
g. Diagnostic teaching methods
h. Career education--this was the strongest component of plans as way to more thoughtfully and more practically prepare students for competitive society (Abt Associates, 1975).

Full documentation of this study will be available in 1979. It will bear careful study for those concerned with preparing for the eighties.

No survey of promising education practices in secondary schools would be complete without discussion of the Model Schools Program conceptualized by J. Lloyd Trump and his colleagues. There are seven basic concepts of secondary educational needs by students and teachers that underlie the program (NASSP Bulletin, 1977):

a. Interdisciplinary approach
b. Personalized learning
c. Continuous growth
d. Integrated and sequential program
e. Teaching concepts
f. Continual coordination and inservice
g. Teacher/Advisor counseling

The Model Schools Program is built on four specific premises, each of which is amplified in a particular book. The four premises with the title of corresponding books are:

a. Responsibility for change lies at the local level--this concept is included in all three of the following books;

b. A prescribed, specific model to follow--School for Everyone

c. Emphasis on evaluation--How Good is Your School

d. Study of the process of change--How to Change Your School

Although the Model Schools Program is not primarily for small and rural schools, there are some specific charts and suggestions as to how it could be used in those circumstances.

There are several clusters of educational innovations that appear notable either for their quantity or their quality. They will be presented in categorical form.

Of the eight major target areas for change in the Experimental Schools Project, career education was a strong priority (Abt Ass.: 1973). This concern is reiterated in the literature. There are over twenty publications or reports related to career or vocational education in rural or small schools published in the ERIC system since the late 1960's.

Another prime area of development appears to be related to the concept of individualized instruction. Several models are being developed as a way to diversify curriculum according to student needs in a small school setting. Regional cooperatives and innovative scheduling techniques seem to also deserve attention to meet the challenge of ruralness.

Several additional isolated topics aimed at curriculum improvements are found in the literature. Among these are:

a. use of the daily newspaper to teach current events;

b. a teacher exchange program to demonstrate good teaching practice;

c. use of audio and video equipment to enlarge on classroom experiences;

d. use of mobile facilities for the delivery of instructional services to rural children.

There are a number of institutions or organizations that have had and continue to have rural and/or small school education as their focus. These are listed with addresses and other pertinent information in the appendix of this document.

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Change Process Simulation

I. Assessing Needs: Begin by establishing the concept that the purpose is to provide positive assistance to teachers in their efforts to improve classroom activities.

A. Ask each participant to answer the question: What were the most difficult teaching situations that you faced or observed in the last six months or so? Provide a sheet of paper for this list.

B. Transfer the above list to the "Needs Assessment Instrument" (Appendix I)

1. In small groups, analyze the responses on the "Needs Assessment Instrument" and select one or more changes in the school that the group would like to make.

a. Present list of "Ten Easiest To Achieve Changes," from NASSP Model Schools Project, to help with selection of changes desired:

(1) The teacher adviser
(2) Providing options
(3) Developing materials
(4) Curriculum revision through mini-courses
(5) Providing better spaces in existing buildings
(6) Making schedules more flexible
(7) Increased use of the community as a learning resource
(8) Program evaluation
(9) Evaluating and reporting pupil progress
(10) The supervisory-management team

b. Suggest use of "Chart to Analyze Potential for Success" (Appendix II)

II. Develop Plan to Achieve Desired Change(s)

A. Supervisory-management team provide leadership

Meet at least once a week to establish priorities, develop plans, collect and analyze relevant data, evaluate progress, and revise plans.

B. Consider "Questions Which Are Basic to School Change," from How to Change Your School (Trump and Georgiades, NASSP, 1978).

Answering the following questions is an essential step in changing your school. The order is not significant, but each question is relevant to your success. They are numbered only for convenience during discussion.

1. Have your determined your priorities?
2. How will you and the teachers involved find the time to change your school?
3. How will you involve the students so they know what is to happen, how, and the personal and group evaluation methods used to measure the results?
4. How will the leadership system actually work?
5. How will you explain the changes to the community?
6. Have you planned to redeploy expenditures?
7. Have you recognized differences adequately and planned accordingly to make better use of available talents and interests?
8. How will you explain the outcomes?
9. Do you have a tentative timetable for the change?
10. How will you explain the outcomes?
11. Can you develop a continuing "halo effect"?
12. Is it worth it all?

Summary of Principles for School Change

1. Assess needs
2. Identify change desired
3. Develop a plan for change
   a. Use sound methods (participatory)
      (1) Understand goals
      (2) Use positive motivation

(3) Use shared decision making

(4) Plan for evaluation

b. Provide options

c. Develop appropriate organization

d. Keep in mind "Questions Which Are Basic to School Change"

4. Evaluate change efforts

Appendix I

NEEDS ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

1 - Very serious problem
2 - Serious problem
3 - Slight problem
4 - Not a problem

1 - Needs immediate attention
2 - Needs attention
3 - No attention needed
4 - No possibility of change

Seriousness	Problem	Attention Needed
1 2 3 4		1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4		1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4		1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4		1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4		1 2 3 4
etc.		etc.

Appendix II

CHART TO ANALYZE POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

Possible Change: _____

Factors to Consider	Potential for Success	Potential for Failure	Undecided
Costs			
Available talent			
Potential gains for students			
Better use of facilities			
Improved community relations			
Better use of teacher time			